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ABSTRACT

The Comprehensive Plan for the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) in New York State contains both long-range goals and short-term actions for the next 20 years with a series of specific actions proposed for the current 3-year (1985-87) period. The first chapter provides program background with sections on OVR'S mission, recent trends in vocational rehabilitation, and the current program. The next chapter identifies long range goals and policy directions for the following areas: rehabilitation service entitlement, training for the future, coordination of services, and stimulus for employment. The last chapter provides the action plan with a detailed statement of issues and plan of action. Among the eight issues examined are the state's commitment to the provision of a full range of rehabilitation services through the provision of adequate funds, the role of independent living, and rehabilitation models for addressing changing needs. The action plan is presented in a series of charts organized by the eight issues and their specific goals. For each goal, action descriptions, methods, and expected outcomes for each of three years (1985-1987) are given. A one-page supplement describes the process used in developing this comprehensive plan. (DB)

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COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR THE OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

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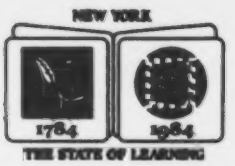

THE BICENTENNIAL OF THE BOARD OF REGENTS AND THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY
AND COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION
THE NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12234

The Comprehensive Plan for the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation was approved by the New York State Board of Regents in June 1984. The Plan was prepared through a year-long process which involved individuals and groups across the State of New York. An initial draft plan was prepared by a subcommittee of my Advisory Council for Vocational Rehabilitation. That draft was discussed by more than 1,000 participants in six conferences. Conference recommendations were reviewed by the Advisory Council and a final Plan was forwarded to the Board of Regents for approval.

The Plan includes both long-range goals and short-term actions. The long-range goals focus on major policy and program initiatives for the next twenty years. To begin meeting the goals, a series of specific actions are proposed together with expected results over the next three years.

I urge careful review of this Plan and support to improve services to the disabled. We welcome your comments and suggestions on the Plan, and we look forward to your active assistance in insuring that these goals become a reality.

Sincerely,

Gordon M. Ambach

FOREWORD

The Board of Regents is the oldest and most comprehensive educational governing board in the country. In this our bicentennial year, we are adopting and coordinating plans covering all of our fields of responsibilities. Vocational Rehabilitation is an important part of our overall program. The Board of Regents and the State Education Department are in a unique position to coordinate in a cost-effective manner the needed delivery service to carry out the detailed plan presented here.

The Regents are dedicated to equal educational opportunity for all persons. This opportunity includes comprehensive vocational rehabilitation services that result in productive employment and a life of independence for disabled persons. The Comprehensive Plan for the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation presents our service program to promote full opportunity for disabled persons. It is the first such plan in the country.

Strengthened connections among education, rehabilitation, and the work place will open more employment opportunities for disabled persons. Employers should provide specific information on skills and capabilities required to perform tasks. Education and training personnel then must provide programs to develop the skills. Rehabilitation personnel must provide the support and assistance to match qualified disabled workers with openings.

We urge all sectors to work towards the elimination of those barriers which deny equal opportunity for disabled persons. This Plan will guide that effort with your help.

Willard A. Genrich

Chancellor

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR THE OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

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The University Of The State Of New York
THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
Albany, New York 12234
June 1984

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INTRODUCTION

This document presents a plan for rehabilitation in New York State. The plan will guide the State Education Department and Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) efforts to provide for and coordinate rehabilitation during the next twenty years.

The plan has four parts. The Program Background section, Part I, describes the mission, purpose, status and program levels of the current OVR program.

Long Range Goals and Policy Directions are presented in Part II. These reflect the vision of the Board of Regents and the Commissioner of Education as to the responsibility of the Education Department and OVR for the future.

Part III presents actions for the improvement of the vocational rehabilitation program during the next three years. The strategy described provides actions for the first part of the long range program.

The fourth part is a description of the process for preparation of this plan. The plan is the result of combined efforts by the Board of Regents, Education Department and Commissioner's Advisory Council on Vocational Rehabilitation together with more than 1,000 interested persons who participated in six regional conferences to discuss the issues and make recommendations for the plan.

PART I
PROGRAM BACKGROUND

OVR's Current Mission

The mission of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation is to help disabled people with substantial barriers to employment to become economically self-sufficient. This economic independence benefits both the individual and society. The individual is helped because, through receipt of vocational rehabilitation counseling and other services, barriers to employment are reduced or eliminated. Society benefits because economically independent persons may not need extensive social services, can contribute to the tax base and increase the productivity of the work force.

OVR works with both private industry and governmental or not-for-profit organizations to promote economic independence for the disabled. OVR counselors have extensive contacts with government and business employers which are used to help disabled persons find jobs, and to contribute to economic and job development in the State by making employers aware of the benefits of hiring the disabled. Additionally, OVR works with other governmental and not-for-profit organizations to obtain adequate transportation, barrier-free housing, health care, personal counseling and other services needed to enable disabled persons to become economically independent.

The key person in the OVR service delivery system is the OVR counselor, who evaluates all potential clients to see if they meet two basic criteria for service eligibility. First, the potential client must have a physical or mental disability which results in a substantial handicap to employment. Second, there must be a reasonable expectation that provision of services will help the client become employed. The counselor works with the client to thoroughly assess individual needs and capabilities to determine if the person meets these criteria. If the person is determined eligible, the client and counselor develop a plan of services designed to meet the client's appropriate vocational goal. The counselor also works with employers to develop appropriate openings for job-ready clients. Guidance, counseling and placement services provided by the vocational rehabilitation counselor, combined with services purchased from vendors, assist the disabled person to obtain and maintain suitable employment.

Recent Trends

Federal legislative guarantees of the rights of persons with disabilities were established in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 established a firm national commitment to the elimination of discrimination based solely upon an individual's handicapping condition. It also reaffirmed the Federal government's commitment to provide leadership and funding through the Federal/State vocational rehabilitation program to assist individuals whose disabilities result in substantial handicaps to employment, and for whom a reasonable probability exists that vocational rehabilitation services will improve their employability. Over the past 10 years, these laws have substantially increased society's awareness of the needs of disabled persons. The Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 extended to all handicapped children the fundamental right of a free appropriate public education. It guaranteed a number of rights to handicapped children and their parents, and has led to implementation of procedural safeguards to insure those rights. This legislation substantially improved the quality and quantity of educational opportunities for handicapped children. Recent Federal reauthorization and appropriation action indicates continued Federal support of the current direction of these programs for disabled persons.

Amendments of 1976 to the 1963 Vocational Education Act provided for coordination of Vocational Education for handicapped students with the requirements of those students' Individualized Education Plans, and for vocational education services for students in the least restrictive environment.

In New York State, laws were amended to make State law consistent with Federal legislation. An important State legal milestone was the Willowbrook consent decree of 1975. This agreement significantly decreased the number of developmentally disabled adults and children who had been institutionalized in a State-operated facility on Staten Island and confirmed a trend to place disabled persons in less restrictive settings. Consequently, from an inpatient population of nearly 112,000 during the 1960's, there are approximately 32,000 mentally disabled individuals now residing in State institutions.

While laws were changing, society was changing also. Advances in medical science meant that more seriously disabled infants were surviving, and that life expectancy was increasing for disabled populations.

The national and State economy also continued to change. The number of service jobs, many of which were low-paying, continued to increase while high paying manufacturing jobs

in basic industries continued to decline. More emphasis began to be placed on retraining manufacturing workers whose jobs have been permanently lost; new training programs, such as the Job Training Partnership Act of 1983, mandate private sector and government cooperation to train the disadvantaged and disabled. However, the economic recession, including the especially hard 1981/82 recession, affected job prospects for the disabled.

Current Program

These past and emerging trends affecting persons with handicapping conditions have resulted in a diverse caseload of clients served by OVR.

The OVR active caseload is made up of all clients who have been certified as eligible for vocational rehabilitation service and are: developing plans; are receiving services under a plan; or are ready for or have been recently placed in employment. As of the last Federal fiscal year ending October 1, 1983, 29,851 disabled individuals were part of the active caseload of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. Some 14,951 clients comprising 50% of the active caseload were participating in educational, vocational or other training programs.

During the last three years, the characteristics of the clients have remained relatively constant in terms of major disability, age, race and education. One-half of the caseload is primarily disabled by mental illness or mental retardation. Orthopedic impairments account for one-quarter of the active cases. Seven percent of the active clients have a hearing impairment as their major disability. The remaining clients are disabled by illness or amputations, etc.

The OVR active caseload statistics show that 27% of OVR clients are 19 years of age or younger; 35% of the active clients are between 20 and 30 years old; 35% are between the ages of 31 and 50; 3% are 55 or older. The racial breakdown of the active caseload shows that 79% of the clients are white, 19% are black and all other categories make up 2% of all clients. The education at referral of OVR clients shows that 16% have received some education beyond the high school level. Twenty-five percent of the caseload has attended ungraded special education classes.

In addition to the 29,851 clients in the active caseload, another 16,522 disabled individuals had been referred to OVR and were in diagnostic/evaluation status for purpose of determining eligibility for OVR services.

PART II
LONG-RANGE GOALS AND POLICY DIRECTIONS

The year 1984 signifies a timely benchmark for measuring the current conditions and forecasting a new destiny for disabled persons. The current Federal trend continues to back away from social supports for persons in need, including the disabled. In the place of government entitlement and subsidy, the current trend is for social services to be provided in large part through the auspices of private and charitable organizations. These agencies can and do make substantial contributions to the particular needs of specialized interest groups. However, predicating the availability of basic services such as housing, employment, food and training on the private and voluntary sector raises questions about the equitable distribution of these services to all persons in need. Both public and private commitment is needed to offer all persons, regardless of disability, a chance to become full, contributing members of society.

Unlike the Federal picture, public policy in New York State has traditionally reflected a broad acceptance of responsibility by the State government for the welfare of its citizens. Especially in the area of education, the Executive and Legislative branches have jointly recognized the appropriate role of the government in providing the highest quality education for all children in New York, including those with handicapping conditions. The Board of Regents, through the Commissioner of Education and the administration of the State Education Department, has designed an educational system that challenges each individual student to reach his or her greatest learning potential. Every child under the age of 21 is entitled to a free, appropriate education supported through public educational finances.

Disabled persons have not benefitted from a program of comprehensive services such as available from the educational system. As a result, many disabled people have missed the opportunity to take their appropriate places in society and the economy. Instead, they become dependent on society and a cost to the economy rather than independent contributors. Forecasted changes in the labor market may only exacerbate the problems of the disabled persons in meeting their productive potential.

The Board of Regents accepts the challenge of leadership in planning a comprehensive rehabilitation service system which is responsive not only to the demands of the changing economy but also to the individual needs of the disabled person in becoming independent and productive in all life activities including employment, housing, recreation and transportation. The policy directions identified here by the Board of Regents will guide the future of

the Department's rehabilitation program over the next twenty years. These long-range goals never lose sight of the focus of service, the disabled person, even though they concentrate on sometimes provocative changes to the rehabilitation program itself.

1. Rehabilitation Service Entitlement

Unlike the educational system which guarantees every child with a handicapping condition a free, appropriate education in the least restrictive setting, the vocational rehabilitation program does not now entitle every disabled person to rehabilitation services. The current VR program adds a second criteria for service eligibility in addition to the presence of a disabling condition: that VR services will improve the disabled person's employability. Vocational rehabilitation services are restricted to those disabled individuals who can reasonably be expected to become employable after services are provided. In essence, this criteria denies services to the many persons so severely disabled that employment may never be a viable goal. It also restricts services from many disabled individuals who are currently in the work force or who are too old to re-enter the labor market. These groups of disabled individuals have legitimate needs that could be met through rehabilitation services when no other service program is available. These persons could certainly benefit from rehabilitation services in some other life areas besides employment.

The Board of Regents is committed to pursuing avenues to expand the Department's rehabilitation program to a more comprehensive program addressing the rehabilitation needs of all disabled persons. Parallel to the Education of All Handicapped Children program, the Board of Regents recognizes the need for a Rehabilitation of All Disabled Persons program with a variety of service goals including independence in life activities such as housing, transportation, and recreation as well as in employment. The services available through such a system would expand the provision of independent living services which are not necessarily directed toward achieving a vocational goal.

In establishing this long-range program direction, the Board of Regents recognizes that disabled individuals are valued members of society who can make a broader contribution than merely to the tax base. A person's ability to exercise freedom of choice, to control his or her own life, to function independently in the community and to enjoy the benefits of our society are acknowledged as equally important outcomes.

The Board of Regents will endeavor to enact such a rehabilitation entitlement program at both the Federal and State level. Both the Federal and State government currently provide some support for independent living centers which offer some services separate and distinct from the VR program. But the comprehensive service program is not now available. The results of some specific short-term actions described in Part II will contribute to the justification of need and program definition as this entitlement program develops.

2. Training for the Future

At the same time that rehabilitation should be expanded to include non-vocational goals, the importance of preparing capable disabled individuals for jobs should not be cast aside. The shift in the economy towards information, service and technological occupations must be matched with training programs to develop skills and knowledge in the work force to meet these changes. If handicapped workers are to find a suitable place in that work force, they must also have full access to skills training programs. This means that skills development programs may need to be modified to accommodate disabled persons.

In addition to skills training, strong basic educational skills, including reading and applied math and science, will be required for the majority of job openings forecast for the future. Basic skills training is provided to handicapped school-aged students under their Individualized Education Plans and to disabled adults through programs such as the Job Training Partnership Act.

The Board of Regents fully considers the special needs of disabled persons in planning programs and services within its purview. An example of this consideration is the objective stated in the Regents Action Plan to Improve Elementary and Secondary Education Results in New York:

> "to assure access to educational opportunity for those who may need special help, extra time, particular assistance or patient help to realize their full potential"

Disabled persons who attempt to enter or re-enter the work force face substantial physical and attitudinal barriers simply due to their disabling condition. The Board of Regents is committed to eliminate the additional barrier of lack of

appropriate skills to match the jobs that are now available and that will grow in the years to come. To accomplish this, the Board of Regents proposes three policy directions related to training disabled persons for employment in the future. First, basic foundation skills including math and science should be encouraged for handicapped students in the schools who will soon be looking for employment, and should be made available for disabled workers who are or may be faced with dislocation from their current jobs. Second, skills training programs should be designed in occupational areas with proven successful placement of disabled persons and that are expected to grow in the future. Third, disabled persons should receive intensive training in employability skills; that is, in job-seeking and career development so that they can find and advance on the job once they have the necessary skills to perform the tasks of the job.

3. Coordination of Services

Effective public policy requires clear statements of authority and responsibility to insure consistent and equitable services for individuals with special needs. Because the needs of disabled persons cut across many standard governmental functions (i.e., education, health, social services, among others), particular attention must be devoted to insuring that services are coordinated to best meet the needs of persons with disabilities. Increasing constraints on public resources dictate that maximum efforts be expended to assure a delivery system that is responsive to individual needs with minimum duplication or overlap in functions. This insures an uninterrupted flow of services that disabled individuals may need through life.

There are currently a number of interagency "continuum of service" models being developed that track a sequence of services over time for discrete portions of the disabled population. For instance, plans are underway to test service continua for the mentally retarded and developmentally disabled as well as for handicapped in-school youth. The models include defined responsibility for the provision and funding of direct services and support services among the many parts of State government. Further refinement and expansion of these models to other groups will require a coordinated effort to establish common objectives, to define standard eligibility criteria, to develop service definitions and to reduce competition for funding among service programs.

The Board of Regents firmly believes that the State Education Department plays a key role in coordinating services to the disabled since it is already the designated State agency for providing education, vocational training, vocational rehabilitation, cultural opportunities, independent living and sheltered employment services for disabled persons. The State Education Department seeks policy advice on coordinated program planning for the disabled through the participation of other State agencies and consumer groups represented on Advisory and Planning Committees. In addition, the Department maintains written cooperative agreements defining responsibility for providing service between OVR and other agencies serving disabled persons.

4. Stimulus for Employment

While in school, handicapped students are entitled to special support services to assist them in adequately pursuing their education. These support services, which are provided by the local school districts, can include special transportation, assistive devices, physical care attendants, interpreters, notetakers, and physical or speech therapists. Once the student graduates or leaves school, the cost of these services may be paid by Medicaid when they are health-related or by OVR when they are in support of direct services aimed at a chosen vocational objective. Once the disabled person successfully achieves his or her vocational goal and obtains employment, public subsidy of all support services is terminated.

The need for the support services mentioned above does not cease when the disabled person finds employment. The services are directly related to the individual's disability and are often as vital to maintaining employment as they were to preparing for the job. These services are often very costly and are usually needed to perform the job every work day. Because of the economic difficulties in the present job market, many disabled persons must accept placement in low paying, entry level jobs. Still others are limited to part-time employment due to the extent of their disabling conditions. Neither entry level nor part-time wages are sufficient to finance expensive support services that may be required by many disabled people. These facts all present substantial disincentives to many who are otherwise ready, willing and able to work.

The Board of Regents proposes to counteract work disincentives with a program of work stimulation. The program would motivate disabled persons to accept jobs by eliminating the fear of losing the benefits of support services. Rather, support

services for the successfully employed could be funded through innovative mechanisms such as low-interest loans, wage incentives, joint employer/employee-contributed trust funds, large volume contract purchasing or insurance carrier policies instead of through the take-home pay of disabled workers. The Board of Regents will pursue various alternatives for financing these necessary services in order to provide a stimulus to choosing employment for the disabled.

To summarize these areas of policy direction charted by the Board of Regents, the needs of the disabled can best be addressed by an expansion of the purpose and scope of the rehabilitation program beyond vocational bounds. This means a new philosophy for the program which includes measures of success other than employment. It also means a broad expansion of the role of the State Education Department and its Office of Vocational Rehabilitation in coordinating services and planning with other agencies. These changes will be sought through legislative and planning means over the course of the next 20 years. While these efforts will be going on, OVR is charged with acting on currently identified needs. To enhance this effort, the Board of Regents has actively become involved with program priorities which have included a strong emphasis on persons with disabilities. OVR is directed to take the shorter-term actions included in the plan that follows in Part III.

PART III
ACTION PLAN

1. Statement of Issues

In cooperation with the Commissioner's Advisory Council for Vocational Rehabilitation, the major issues that follow below were identified. These issues categorize both the successful aspects of the current VR program as well as areas that need improvement. The eight issues were the topics for discussion at a series of statewide conferences held in January and February. The issues are presented here as a restatement of the problems that the Action Plan is meant to address.

ISSUE 1. State Commitment to the Provision of a Full Range of Rehabilitation Services Through the Provision of Adequate Public Funds. Given the continued economic problems and constraints on public resources, a major area of concern is the State's commitment to the provision of a full range of rehabilitation services. For disabled children, both the State and national governments are committed to a policy of a free, appropriate public education with the provision of full services while children are in school. Rehabilitation programs and services should receive funding based on equitability with other programs funded through the State with recognition given to the needs of disabled persons in relationship to the availability of both personal and societal resources. The availability of rehabilitation services should not be predicated on their provision by private or charitable organizations. Current conditions in New York State dictate that difficult choices must be made when allocating scarce resources among compelling and competing needs. Within this environment, substantial efforts must be devoted to insuring that adequate public funds are provided for rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities. Within the rehabilitation community, priority attention should be directed to developing an information base that allows for appropriate documentation and verification of the cost-benefits of rehabilitation services. These include increases in tax revenues and reductions in public benefit transfer payments resulting from the rehabilitation process. The information should

be widely disseminated to the general public and should be readily available to key executive and legislative leaders as important funding decisions are made. Services and funding must be based on identified needs with a full State commitment to meeting those needs.

ISSUE 2. Delineation of the Unique Role of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Specific Vocational Nature of its Services. The vocational rehabilitation program has been in existence for over 60 years. One of the great strengths of the program has been its demonstrated capability in organizing and coordinating a variety of resources that enable individual disabled persons to overcome barriers to employment. Once an individual is deemed eligible for vocational rehabilitation, vocational rehabilitation counselors can arrange for, and obtain, a wide variety of services and assistance, specifically intended to result in a successful employment outcome for the individual.

Employment outcomes include competitive employment, sheltered employment, homemaker and self-employment. Within the rehabilitation community, the criteria which govern determinations of eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services are well-known. As defined in law, an individual is eligible for vocational rehabilitation services if (s)he has a physical or mental disability which for the individual results in a substantial barrier to employment and there is a reasonable expectation that vocational rehabilitation services may benefit the individual in terms of employability. To many outside the rehabilitation community, the fact that vocational rehabilitation services are specifically targeted to employment outcomes is not necessarily well-known or understood. Unlike a variety of social welfare and direct service programs for dependent populations, vocational rehabilitation is not an entitlement program. Provision of services is based upon an eligibility determination as required by Federal law. In light of substantial expansion of community-based programs and services including school-based programs for disabled persons as alternatives to institutionalization, significant issues concerning the roles and responsibilities of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation have arisen. It is becoming increasingly important that efforts be directed at delineating and clarifying the unique role and the specific vocational nature of vocational

rehabilitation services in order to reduce potential duplication or service overlap.

A specific area of concern is the relationship of vocational rehabilitation programs and services to related services provided by other State, local and Federal agencies. The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation is but one component in a much larger State system of services for disabled individuals. Over the past decade, new and expanded programs of work activity, day programming and sheltered employment have emerged to meet needs of specific populations, including many who require long-term care and support. At the current time, various funding sources have been used to provide needed services, but difficulties have arisen in insuring a consistency and equitability of services. In delineating the unique role of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation in the service delivery system, cooperative efforts must be continued and strengthened with a number of State, local and Federal agencies in order to clarify and refine areas of responsibility including the interrelationship of funding sources. Specific obstacles or disincentives to employment must be identified and addressed. It is crucial that every effort be made to insure that effective mechanisms are in place to coordinate the diverse services available in both the public and private sectors. This area of concern has become more critical in recent years due to the combination of shrinking resources and changing needs of the populations.

ISSUE 3. Expanding Ties to Business, Industry and Labor to Support Economic Development in New York State. The decade of the 1970's was a period of economic decline for New York State. The State lost population and new job generation was much below the national average. Major declines in employment in the manufacturing sector occurred with a loss of 439,000 jobs during the decade. While this decline was offset by increased employment in other industries, most notably service industries, it was clear that a major transformation was occurring in the State's economy.

Major initiatives are now underway at both the State and local levels of government to attract, retain and expand business and industry in order to support economic development in New York State. Under the direction of the Board of Regents, educational and cultural institutions are being

encouraged to work more closely with the corporate sector and apply educational resources more directly to problems of expanding and reshaping the State's productive capacity, particularly in the area of advanced technology.

For disabled people, a strong State economy is of vital concern. Historically, periods of high unemployment have severely constricted employment opportunities for disabled people. Provision of needed support services is affected since resources are limited due to declines in the tax base. Needs of non-disabled people increase due to unemployment which requires additional commitment of public resources.

While vocational rehabilitation has no direct role in economic development, there are a number of areas where vocational rehabilitation can support and contribute to the State's economic growth, which in turn strengthens employment opportunities for disabled individuals. Vocational rehabilitation can support the development and expansion of training programs that develop skills for current and future jobs and which equip individuals to take advantage of the latest technologies. In spite of high unemployment, there is still a high demand for qualified, skilled workers in emerging occupations. Vocational rehabilitation can also expand its support and assistance to business and industry and employee unions on issues related to worker productivity. Productivity loss due to emotional problems, job stress, alcohol and substance abuse is a major concern of business and industry, and employee assistance programs are rapidly expanding to prevent and/or help employees cope with such problems. Vocational rehabilitation professionals' knowledge, skills and capabilities in working with individuals with disabilities could be further expanded and applied in these areas. Vocational rehabilitation can also expand assistance to employers in complying with national and State laws and regulations in regards to nondiscrimination and employment of disabled persons. Current efforts are underway with a number of large corporations, and these initiatives might be expanded to include more businesses, particularly small businesses which are becoming more crucial to economic development in the State.

ISSUE 4. Participation of Private and Voluntary Sectors' Participation in a Broad Based State Managed Service Delivery System. Private and voluntary sectors have long been instrumental in defining and making known needs of disabled individuals, and in promoting development of services to meet those needs. Any comprehensive and coordinated continuum of services for disabled persons must involve and draw upon the knowledge, commitment and expertise that exists in the private and voluntary sectors. Efforts must be devoted to strengthening the partnership of public, private and voluntary agencies to assure the availability and provision of services to persons with disabilities. Under State leadership, the participation of the private and voluntary sectors should be expanded to improve the availability and consistency of statewide programs and services. Specific activities should be directed towards developing new and strengthening existing ties, and fostering improved communication and consultation within all segments of a broad-based delivery system.

ISSUE 5. Needs of Disabled Persons in Education. The educational and cultural institutions of New York State are part of The University of the State of New York. The institutions include public and nonpublic elementary and secondary schools; boards of cooperative educational services; public and independent colleges; universities and professional schools; public libraries and library systems, museums, archives and historical societies; proprietary vocational schools; nursery schools; hospital nursing schools; public television stations; and, public radio stations. The mission of The University and the State Education Department is to provide every resident of the State, regardless of age, sex, economic or social status, race, religion, national origin, language or disabling condition, the broadest possible range of high quality educational programs and services.

As one of four major offices in the State Education Department, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation is in a unique position of promoting and fostering the integration of services to disabled persons within the institutions in the University. The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation acts as a catalyst and resource for total participation of disabled individuals including full accessibility to programs in elementary, secondary and higher education, and libraries and cultural institutions. The Office of Vocational

Rehabilitation, working cooperatively with all offices of the State Education Department, plays a valuable role in linking educational programs and services with identified employment needs of persons with disabilities. The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation's knowledge and expertise in working with employers in the community provides a solid base for assisting education personnel in developing and implementing quality programs that improve educational, cultural, and employment opportunities for disabled individuals.

During the most recent year, over one-quarter of a million handicapped children were enrolled in the State's public school system. This figure represents more than nine percent of total enrollment in public schools. The State Education Department's efforts are being directed toward the development of a comprehensive system of services that links special education, vocational education, and vocational rehabilitation. A major issue currently being addressed is the "aging-out" of youth from education programs and services to adult services. The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation will be working cooperatively with other major offices in the State Education Department and with related State agencies to strengthen coordination of services during this transition period. Increased coordination and linking of these services will improve both educational and employment outcomes for disabled individuals. Through these efforts, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation can be an important technical assistance resource for linking institutions within the University, particularly in terms of expanding an awareness of the needs of disabled persons in New York State. The current project of the Board of Regents to review the long-range goals of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation demonstrates a commitment to the continuation and strengthening of these cooperative efforts.

ISSUE 6. Reexamination of the Current Concentration of Programs and Resources. The changing structure of services to disabled persons, most notably the move away from an institutional model to the development of community-based services, calls for a reexamination of the most effective alternatives for meeting their vocational and employment needs. Over the last 10-15 years, a large proportion of clients receiving vocational rehabilitation

services were individuals who were returning to communities as part of New York State's deinstitutionalization effort. This population has declined appreciably; the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation is no longer receiving the high levels of referrals in previous years. The reduction in these referrals is being offset by an increase in referrals of handicapped youth and young adults who are leaving education systems and are in need of special assistance to gain employment and independence in living. Additional efforts and attention must be devoted to this significant change in clients and potential changes in the types of programs and services required.

A growing area of need is career counseling and guidance for disabled youth and adults. Rapid changes in the labor market, particularly related to new and changing occupations related to technological change require an increased sensitivity and knowledge of the needs of business and industry. To assure that disabled individuals are provided appropriate skill training to enable them to compete for new employment opportunities, more concentrated efforts are needed to work with business and industry to identify future labor market trends and define skills needed for new job openings.

ISSUE 7. The Role of Independent Living. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 established a new independent living services program as an adjunct to the vocational rehabilitation program. Independent living programs foster and promote the full participation of disabled individuals in society. The programs provide a variety of services including peer counseling, attendant care, equipment repair, housing referral, transportation and others. Independent living programs advocate for the needs of disabled persons in order to increase their accessibility and integration in society.

Independent living is a generic program, and can provide services and assistance to all disabilities. As initially conceived and implemented by Federal law, State vocational rehabilitation agencies were given responsibility for independent living services. Independent living was viewed as an extension and support of the vocational rehabilitation program. Like vocational rehabilitation, independent living can provide, or arrange for, a

variety of services that would assist individuals with any disability to achieve personal and economic independence. Because the provision of independent living services does not require an employment goal, assistance can be provided to individuals who are not eligible for vocational rehabilitation. For many, the provision of independent living services develops capacities and skills which enable them to enter vocational rehabilitation in pursuit of an employment outcome.

The Governor and Legislature have recognized the need for independent living services, and have authorized support through the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for 19 centers throughout the State of New York. An important concern is that sufficient resources are made available to enable provision of quality services to all disabled people in need. Another concern is that independent living services are closely coordinated and integrated with vocational rehabilitation and other State programs for disabled persons.

ISSUE 8. Rehabilitation Models for Addressing Changing Needs of Populations Being Served. A review of programs and services for disabled persons must include consideration of new and innovative models for both addressing the changing needs of the populations being served as well as adapting to technological changes and advances in society as a whole. This effort could include: identifying new sources of referrals of disabled individuals to the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation; a review and examination of the role of the vocational rehabilitation counselor in the rehabilitation process; improving methods for projecting numbers and needs of youth and young adults as they move out of education programs with priority effort being directed at youth "aging-out" of education programs and moving into adult services; expanding appropriate services for targeted populations such as disabled individuals with limited English proficiency, the learning disabled and older disabled persons; exploring and developing alternative methods for procuring support services that are necessary for an individual to maintain employment; supporting and developing specific skill training programs to enable disabled individuals to obtain employment in new and expanding technological fields; applying technology to meet the needs of disabled individuals through such fields as bioengineering and rehabilitation

medicine; and exploring new and innovative ways of expanding the availability and provision of independent living services.

2. Action Description

The actions proposed in the attached charts will guide the use of OVR resources in the next three years. These proposed actions are presented in the following framework:

a) The time period is three years with annual update anticipated. The three-year timeframe is used so that these specific actions and outcomes can be related directly to the required VR Federal/State Plan which must be presented for a three year period and include annual updating.

b) Annual review of the Plan will be made and adjustments on actions proposed based on progress toward meeting goals.

c) The Plan is limited to actions within the control of the State Education Department and Office of Vocational Rehabilitation.

d) The Plan is to be accomplished mainly through existent staff and with anticipated modest cost of living increases and current funding levels.

The action charts that follow provide concise statements of the specific types of action to be taken. These actions are categorized with the indicators: services, policy formation, administration, legislation, research and evaluation. Expected results are in order for each of the three years. In each case, the result is to be attained by April 1 of that year.

Implementation of this Action Plan requires operational work plans with OVR for each step. An annual report describing OVR's progress toward meeting expected results each year will be prepared for the Board of Regents and interested persons.

ISSUE 1. FUNDING

GOAL 1.1. To establish a policy and payment system under which the appropriate costs of services delivery to vocational rehabilitation clients are reimbursed.

ACTION DESCRIPTION	METHOD	EXPECTED OUTCOMES		
		APRIL 1985	APRIL 1986	APRIL 1987
1. Refine standards for cost identification for rehabilitation facility services	Policy (Regulations)	Cost identification regulations approved	Cost identification regulations implemented and monitored	Cost identification regulations monitored
2. Establish rate setting principles to determine reimbursement rates for rehabilitation facility services	Administration (Funding Allocation)	Rate setting principles established and reimbursement rates set	Reimbursement rates set	Reimbursement rates set
3. Request adequate funding to pay costs of vocational rehabilitation services	Administration (Budget Request)	OVR budget request at appropriate level	OVR budget request at appropriate level	OVR budget request at appropriate level

ISSUE 1. FUNDING

GOAL 1.2. To increase public policymakers' knowledge and information about the costs and benefits of vocational rehabilitation services to assist them in planning and allocating public funds.

ACTION DESCRIPTION	METHOD	EXPECTED OUTCOMES		
		APRIL 1985	APRIL 1986	APRIL 1987
1. Study the cost and benefits of vocational rehabilitation services provided by OVR	Policy (Analysis)	Study designed	Study conducted and study results disseminated	

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ISSUE 1. FUNDING

GOAL 1.3. To insure that available vocational rehabilitation resources are used effectively and efficiently in meeting the needs of disabled individuals.

ACTION DESCRIPTION	METHOD	EXPECTED OUTCOMES		
		APRIL 1985	APRIL 1986	APRIL 1987
1. Develop a program evaluation system to identify effective programs in meeting the needs of disabled individuals to use as models to improve overall program quality	Research and Evaluation		System developed	Successful programs identified and results disseminated
2. Develop administrative and management practices for improving delivery of vocational rehabilitation services	Administration	Areas to improve management and administration identified	Practices implemented and updated	Implementation continued and updated
3. Continue to develop and implement this action plan for the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation	Policy (Planning)	Operational work plans developed and implemented	Plan implementation continued	Plan implementation continued

ISSUE 2. ROLE OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

GOAL 2.1. To insure that all disabled individuals who may benefit from vocational rehabilitation services are informed of the availability of services and are provided appropriate services consistent with their employment needs.

ACTION DESCRIPTION	METHOD	EXPECTED OUTCOMES		
		APRIL 1985	APRIL 1986	APRIL 1987
1. Increase dissemination of vocational rehabilitation program information to potential clients, referral sources, employers and the public through various media	Administration (Public Relations)	Marketing strategy and materials developed	Information disseminated	Information updated and disseminated
2. Develop alternative outreach methods to increase the number of appropriate client referrals for VR services	Research and Evaluation	Alternative outreach methods assessed	Number of client referrals increased and new approaches monitored	New approaches reassessed
3. Provide eligible disabled individuals with appropriate VR services to improve employability	Services (Operations)	Insure active caseload is maintained at the appropriate level	Insure active caseload is maintained at the appropriate level	Insure active caseload is maintained at the appropriate level
4. Publish Annual Report of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation's performance in serving the disabled as outlined in the comprehensive planning report	Policy (Planning)	Annual Report format developed	Annual Report completed and plan modified	Annual Report completed and plan modified

ISSUE 2. ROLE OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

GOAL 2.2. To increase coordination of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation services with related services available to disabled individuals in other Federal, State and local programs.

ACTION DESCRIPTION	METHOD	EXPECTED OUTCOMES		
		APRIL 1985	APRIL 1986	APRIL 1987
1. Develop and strengthen interagency policies, strategies and methods for the provision of comprehensive, continuous and coordinated services to mutual clients	Policy (Interagency Cooperation)	Interagency arrangements reviewed and areas that need to be developed and strengthened identified	Interagency arrangements implemented and revised and the review process continued	Review and implementation process continued and progress monitored
2. Identify and make recommendations to reduce disincentives within Federal and State systems that hinder disabled individuals' ability to obtain and maintain employment	Policy (Interagency Cooperation)	In-house task force to study disincentive issue established	Study recommendations made to reduce disincentives	Proposals to implement recommendations advanced

ISSUE 2. ROLE OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

GOAL 2.3. To insure that rehabilitation personnel are provided opportunities for professional growth and development in order to effectively meet their responsibilities.

ACTION DESCRIPTION	METHOD	EXPECTED OUTCOMES		
		APRIL 1985	APRIL 1986	APRIL 1987
1. Work more closely with universities in the areas of curriculum development for vocational rehabilitation counselors and expand opportunities for vocational rehabilitation counseling internships	Administration (Training)	Internships increased and curriculum reviewed	Internships increased and curriculum recommendations developed	Curriculum recommendations shared with universities
2. Increase the knowledge of VR professionals through training in up-to-date practices in the delivery and administration of services to persons with disabilities	Administration (Training)	Practices identified and training conducted	Training conducted	Training conducted

ISSUE 3. TIES TO BUSINESS

GOAL 3.1. To strengthen employment opportunities for disabled individuals by participating in statewide economic development initiatives to attract, retain and expand business and industry in New York State.

ACTION DESCRIPTION	METHOD	EXPECTED OUTCOMES		
		APRIL 1985	APRIL 1986	APRIL 1987
1. Participate in economic development efforts in order to represent the needs of persons with disabilities	Policy (Planning)	Economic development efforts identified and strategy for participation developed	Strategy implemented and recommendations made for disabled persons	Efforts to participate in economic development activities on behalf of the disabled initiated
2. Work with employers to increase their participation in programs that target jobs for the disabled workers	Services (Operations) Administration (Training)	Current incentive practices and levels of participation by employers identified	Methods to increase employer participation determined and training for VR counselors developed	Training conducted

ISSUE 4. PARTICIPATION OF PRIVATE AND VOLUNTARY SECTORS

GOAL 4.1. To improve the availability and quality of services to disabled individuals by strengthening the partnership of public, private and voluntary agencies.

ACTION DESCRIPTION	METHOD	EXPECTED OUTCOMES		
		APRIL 1985	APRIL 1986	APRIL 1987
1. Identify and support successful private and voluntary programs	Administration (Funding Allocation) Research and Evaluation	System to identify successful programs developed	Program to provide funding for these programs developed	Program to provide funding for these programs developed
2. Invite public, private and voluntary agencies and organizations to provide advice on improving services to disabled individuals on particular topics	Administration	Ad hoc advisory forum convened	Advisory forum convened	Advisory forum convened
3. Conduct workshops with representatives of vocational rehabilitation, private and voluntary agencies to discuss and develop recommendations to coordinate and improve services to the disabled	Administration (Training)	Workshops developed	Workshops conducted and recommendations developed	Recommendations implemented

ISSUE 5. NEEDS OF THE DISABLED IN EDUCATION

GOAL 5.1. To improve services to disabled persons through the coordination of educational and cultural programs offered by the institutions of The University of the State of New York.

ACTION DESCRIPTION	METHOD	EXPECTED OUTCOMES		
		APRIL 1985	APRIL 1986	APRIL 1987
1. Continue work within the State Education Department on the comprehensive state plan for coordination of all educational/vocational rehabilitation services to disabled persons	Policy (Planning	Educational needs of the disabled assessed	Recommendations to satisfy educational needs of the disabled developed	Recommendations implemented
2. A major focus of the Plan is to connect services for the population group "aging-out" of schools and in transition to employment and independent living	Legislation	"Aging-out" bill enacted	Implementation of new statute	
3. Process for preparation and use of Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and Individualized Written Rehabilitation Plan (IWRP) for OVR clients are connected	Services (Operations)	Continued increase of placement of VR counselors in BOCES and school districts	Continued implementation of counselor placement program and connection of IEP and IWRP	

ISSUE 6. ALLOCATION OF CURRENT RESOURCES

GOAL 6.1. To improve disabled individuals' ability to meet current and future employment demands by expanding knowledge of employment trends and by developing services that address these trends.

ACTION DESCRIPTION	METHOD	EXPECTED OUTCOMES		
		APRIL 1985	APRIL 1986	APRIL 1987
1. Study current and future employment demands and promote training programs that will enable the disabled person to participate in the market place	Research and Evaluation	Employment demands identified	Marketable occupations for the disabled identified	Programs to train the disabled in marketable occupations developed and promoted
2. Provide training to the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation staff to improve understanding and interpretation of current and future labor market trends	Research and Evaluation Administration (Training)	Available labor market information identified and analyzed	Labor market training for counselors developed and labor market information updated	Labor market information and training or counselors continued and updated
3. Develop job opportunities and place job-ready clients in suitable employment in public and private sectors	Services (Operations)	Job development efforts continued and expanded and a suitable level of rehabilitated clients attained	Job development efforts continued and expanded and a suitable level of rehabilitated clients attained	Job development efforts continued and expanded and a suitable level of rehabilitated clients attained
4. Expand the use of automation techniques in the administrative and case processing activities of OVR	Services (Operations) Administration (Management Services)	Latest automation technologies at the District Office level investigated and piloted and use in Central Office continued and expanded	Useful practices expanded to other District Offices and Central Office use expanded	Useful practices expanded to other District Offices and Central Office use expanded

ISSUE 7. ROLE OF INDEPENDENT LIVING

GOAL 7.1. To support and promote initiatives for full participation of disabled individuals in society by increasing their economic, personal, and social independence.

ACTION DESCRIPTION	METHOD	EXPECTED OUTCOMES		
		APRIL 1985	APRIL 1986	APRIL 1987
1. Analyze the extent to which independent living services increase accessibility and integration of disabled individuals in society	Services (Independent Living Unit) Research and Evaluation	Action incorporated into ongoing independent living evaluation	Independent living evaluation continued	Independent living evaluation continued
2. Establish Independent Living Centers in areas where independent living services are not available to the severely disabled	Administration (Legislation)	New center locations identified	New centers established and center staff trained	Centers monitored
3. Continue and strengthen New York's role as a leader in the independent living movement by working jointly with government and voluntary agencies in assessing common needs of independent living programs	Services (Independent Living Unit)	Common needs assessed of independent living programs	Appropriate forum developed and convened in response to identified needs	Impact of forum assessed
4. Coordinate independent living services and vocational rehabilitation services, where appropriate, to enable disabled individuals to more fully benefit from these programs	Services (Operations) (Independent Living Unit)	Service areas in need of coordination identified	Training for VR counselors and IL staff developed and conducted	Coordination efforts assessed and updated

ISSUE 7. ROLE OF INDEPENDENT LIVING

GOAL 7.1. To support and promote initiatives for full participation of disabled individuals in society by increasing their economic, personal, and social independence.

ACTION DESCRIPTION	METHOD	EXPECTED OUTCOMES		
		APRIL 1985	APRIL 1986	APRIL 1987
5. Introduce independent living concepts to young persons with disabilities through the school system	Services (Independent Living Unit) Administration (Training)	Methods assessed to introduce IL concepts	Package to disseminate information developed	Information package implemented

ISSUE 8. ADDRESSING CHANGING NEEDS

GOAL 8.1. To increase knowledge and information on emerging trends in rehabilitation populations, services and priorities and to promote new approaches to address changing needs.

ACTION DESCRIPTION	METHOD	EXPECTED OUTCOMES		
		APRIL 1985	APRIL 1986	APRIL 1987
1. Assess the current number and needs of disabled persons and develop services for those persons not being adequately served	Research and Evaluation	Needs assessment designed	Needs assessment conducted	Needs assessment conducted and services developed
2. Identify and support innovations in vocational rehabilitation at universities, service providers, and other organizations that address the needs of the disabled	Administration (Funding Allocation)	Grant RFP process established	Annual innovation projects determined and grants funded	Annual innovation projects determined and grants funded

SUPPLEMENT
PREPARATION OF PLAN

During 1984, the New York State Board of Regents is observing its 200th anniversary. The Board of Regents and the Commissioner of Education have established the preparation of plans for the next two decades as an objective for the bicentennial year.

One of the major areas of focus of the State Education Department is serving New York State residents with disabling conditions. The New York State Board of Regents has broad responsibility for establishing educational policy and goals which include education of all disabled children. The Board of Regents is also responsible for policy direction and goal formulation for vocational rehabilitation services for disabled youth and adults.

As part of the twenty-year planning effort, the Board of Regents has developed this plan for vocational rehabilitation services to persons with disabilities in cooperation with the Commissioner of Education's Advisory Council for Vocational Rehabilitation. Early in the project, a discussion paper was developed by OVR staff in consultation with a seven-member Subcommittee of the Commissioner's Advisory Council for Vocational Rehabilitation. This paper was used as a discussion document to solicit reactions from individuals and organizations with interest in vocational rehabilitation.

In early 1984, a series of six conferences were held throughout the State to provide an opportunity for review and discussion of the paper. Participants identified areas of concern and refined the actions proposed in the Plan.

Comments, reactions and suggestions of the conference participants were reviewed and analyzed by the Board of Regents and the Advisory Council during March 1984. The Advisory Council then identified areas on which OVR should concentrate resources. In addition, the Advisory Council recommended specific priority actions for the next year. Both Advisory Council and conference participation were essential to completion of the final Plan.